

WAPIS

NEWSLETTER

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INTERPOL



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EDITORIAL

Dear readers

In this editorial, I would like to share with you a report on the stages of implementation of the WAPIS project in the Gambia. In my role as Inspector General of the Gambia Police Force, I have had the honour, in recent years, of being able to keep a very close eye on the implementation of the WAPIS Programme in the Gambia.

When WAPIS was first introduced to the Gambia Police Force (GPF) in 2017, in my capacity as Chief of Police Administration at the time, I was the main point of contact facilitating and coordinating the project within the Gambia. I really must say that, from the onset, the Gambia understood and appreciated the capabilities of the project.

The readers would no doubt agree that the wave of transnational organized crime and terrorism affecting the region and the world in general is alarming, and we are fully aware that no police strategy can overcome these threats without an effective exchange of police information. Therefore, WAPIS couldn't have come at a better time than now. The implementation of the WAPIS Programme will increase the capacity of national law enforcement agencies regarding the automatic electronic exchange of police data and will reach beyond the region to combat transnational organized crime and terrorism through enhanced information sharing.

The Gambia's success can be attributed to the political engagement of its government at the highest level and the synergy between the various participants, who all realized the importance of this tool to the country's security arrangements.

Here are some of our achievements.

Following signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Gambia and INTERPOL on implementation of the WAPIS Programme in January 2019, several initiatives have taken place, including:

- appointing a WAPIS SPOC, IT expert and Legal expert
- setting up the WANACO legal framework by the Minister of the Interior and the holding of regular sessions
- setting up the DACORE
- signing of an MOU between the DACORE and the NCB



- conducting training in use of the WAPIS system
- extending the system to all law enforcement departments in the country
- assigning staff, dispensing initial training and organizing the handover of equipment by the programme.

The WAPIS system now covers all the major police stations within the capital area at national level.

Following the launching of WAPIS in October 2021, I have identified the permanent site for construction of a modern security installation that will accommodate the National Central Bureau (NCB) for INTERPOL and West African Police Information System (WAPIS) Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE).

As a matter of priority, Gambia will establish “regional liaison offices” in all seven Administrative Regions of the country so that the centralized centre will receive information from the regions, which will in turn receive information from the police stations and units.

Furthermore, the training of personnel in use of the WAPIS System will be a continuing process in the Gambia to maximize the potential for effective utilization of the system. The Head of the DACORE has already been tasked with developing a training calendar to roll out to the regional staff.

I would like to express my gratitude to INTERPOL’s dynamic WAPIS team for the remarkable work they have accomplished, to the European Union Commission for their financial support and last but not least to the ECOWAS Commission for their political support in the framework of the implementation of this Programme.

Finally, I also wish to encourage all my colleagues, the Heads of Policing Establishments in friendly and sister countries to provide enhanced support and collaboration to bring this very important project to fruition.

I wish the WAPIS Programme the best of luck in ensuring the security of the people of the Gambia, the sub-region and the world.

Thank you

LEAD STORIES

Inauguration of the national Data Collection and Registration Centre (NCMS-WAPIS DACORE): Sierra Leone strengthens its security architecture by putting a new structure in place to help combat transnational organized crime and terrorism

The government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, represented by its chief minister, Mr Jacob Jusu SAFFA, inaugurated the National Crime Management System - West African Police Information System (NCMS-WAPIS) Data Collection and Registration Centre on 27 January 2022 at the CID headquarters in Freetown.

This ceremony was also attended by government officials, the head of the political section of the European Union delegation in Freetown, the head of INTERPOL's WAPIS Programme, various law enforcement agency heads, as well as representatives of embassies from ECOWAS and EU Member States based in Sierra Leone.

Inauguration of the Data Collection and Registration Centre is a major milestone in implementation of the WAPIS system in Sierra Leone, which will help improve the country's capacity to react effectively to national, regional and international criminal threats, including transnational organized crime and terrorism. The centre will bring all the law enforcement agencies under one roof in the context

of collecting, centralizing, managing and analysing police data digitally, by sharing this information electronically between national law enforcement agencies and other countries in the region, and INTERPOL.

In addition, in the context of the WAPIS Programme, a training session on how to use the system has been organized and 50 people have been trained. This training was followed by the deployment and installation of WAPIS workstations on the premises of the police, immigration services and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Sierra Leone has been a beneficiary of the WAPIS Programme in the context of its third phase since November 2017. The MoU between the government of Sierra Leone and INTERPOL was signed in January 2019.

The NCMS-WAPIS Centre in Sierra Leone is the ninth operational WAPIS centre in West Africa, after Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and the Gambia. Other inaugurations are due to take place in the coming months in other West African countries.



The chief minister of Sierra Leone cuts the ribbon during inauguration of the NCMS-WAPIS, 27 January 2022, Freetown, Sierra Leone

LEAD STORIES

The Programme Steering Committee met in Abidjan and took important decisions in the context of implementing the Programme.

The Sixth Steering Committee meeting of the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) Programme was held on 10 February 2022 in Abidjan, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and partly over video conference.

The Steering Committee meeting, which was attended by around fifty participants, was co-chaired by representatives of the European Union and the ECOWAS Commission. The deliberations focused on the progress made in overall implementation of the Programme in each participating country since the Steering Committee meeting in March 2021. Since the deadline for INTERPOL to execute the Programme is scheduled in June 2022, particular care has been paid to identifying the measures still needed to achieve the expected results by June 2022 and, in particular, aspects of securing the future of WAPIS beyond INTERPOL's Programme implementation phase. At the end of the meeting, recommendations were made to all the participants, especially the participating countries and partners (ECOWAS, European Union and INTERPOL) in order to support and boost Programme implementation actions.

The quality of this meeting was heightened by the presence of the Minister of Justice for Guinea-Bissau and also WAEMU's Commissioner for Peace and Security.

As a side event to this Steering Committee, the Programme organized a workshop to exchange best practice on managing the data collection and registration centres with a view to allowing agents in these centres manage them effectively, since these centres are at the heart of WAPIS in the countries. Several topics were discussed during these exchanges, notably the organization and running of the DACORE, data quality management, financial management of the DACORE, and also extension of INTERPOL's I-24/7 System to WAPIS to allow users of the national system to benefit from direct access to INTERPOL's global databases.



WAPIS Programme Steering Committee meeting, 10 February 2022, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire



Workshop to exchange best practice on how to manage the DACORE, 8 February 2022, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

LEAD STORIES

Ghana raises awareness on the use of WAPIS among law enforcement agents to strengthen its security architecture.

The Government of the Republic of Ghana, represented by its Minister of the Interior Mr Ambrose DERY, chaired the opening ceremony of the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) briefing event on 22 March 2022 at the Police Headquarters Conference room in Accra.

Government officials, the ECOWAS Resident Representative Baba Gana WAKIL, the Head of the EU delegation Ambassador Irchad RAZAALY as well as the Head of the INTERPOL WAPIS Programme Richard GOTWE also attended this ceremony, together with various Heads of Law enforcement and Representatives of embassies from ECOWAS and EU Member States based in Ghana.

This briefing event organized by the Ghana Police Service with the support of the WAPIS Programme took place over three days and aimed to raise awareness among law enforcement agencies on the role and use of WAPIS in the enhancement of the security system in Ghana.

In his opening speech, the Inspector General of Police, Dr George Akuffo DAMPARE, underlined the significance of this briefing event which gives the European Union, INTERPOL and ECOWAS an opportunity to see for themselves what has been achieved with the funding and logistics they have generously provided. The Inspector General of Police went on to state that the event will encourage the use of WAPIS by numerous stakeholders.

Recognizing the political and operational involvement of the government of Ghana, the Head of the WAPIS Programme, Mr Richard GOTWE thanked the participants for accepting the invitation and shared his satisfaction in seeing that WAPIS has become an essential tool for the law enforcement officers in Ghana to deal effectively and sustainably with crimes.

The Head of the European Union Delegation, Ambassador Irchad RAZAALY, said: "Ghana can be proud of the good work of its law enforcement agencies in general. However, in order to tackle the challenges of crime and terrorism in the 21st century, police and criminal justice services must work together more efficiently and effectively. I am pleased that the EU-financed WAPIS Programme is helping Ghana and the other ECOWAS states to take advantage of the possibilities offered by digitization and internet-based sharing of information."

Following on from the Head of the EU Delegation, the ECOWAS Resident Representative pointed out that this Programme is very important to the ECOWAS security strategy and that the organization will always support the countries in the implementation of this System in the region.

Concluding the remarks, the Minister for the Interior noted that, with the June 2022 handover to ECOWAS approaching, WAPIS Ghana is waiting patiently for positive feedback from other partners to kindly extend the Programme. He urged representatives of the member countries present to impress upon their governments the need to do their utmost to ensure all countries meet their deadlines.



Opening ceremony for the awareness-raising session, 22 March 2022, Accra, Ghana

LEAD STORIES

The WAPIS Programme strengthens its tool with implementation of the project to create an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) in West Africa



Launch meeting, 7 March 2022, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

The WAPIS Programme kicked off implementation of the project to create an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) for countries in West Africa on 1 March 2022.

This project, implemented by INTERPOL with support from CIVIPOL, is funded by the European Union for a period of execution of 33 months and an amount of EUR 15 million.

This technology can be used to identify people effectively, solve cases and link cases due to clues left by criminals at crime scenes. It is therefore an essential component for quickly directing enquiries to the right place and bringing evidence before the courts.

In the context of launching the project activities, a meeting was held between experts from INTERPOL and CIVIPOL in Abidjan from 7 to 10 March with a view to mobilising resources and putting in place the tools needed to execute the project successfully.

In the coming weeks, missions by the implementation team (INTERPOL/CIVIPOL) are planned in the countries. The aim of these missions is to make an assessment of the legal and technical frameworks relating to the existing AFIS, if applicable, or analyse the possibilities (legal and technical) of introducing this component.

Hence, based on the results of the assessment, three countries will be chosen as pilot countries for the implementation of AFIS during the next WAPIS/AFIS Steering Committee scheduled in July 2022. For the other countries, assistance will be put in place either to offer support with making the existing AFIS operational, or to prepare the legal and technical framework for forensics required to host an AFIS in the future. The ultimate goal is therefore to help West African countries benefit from this technology, within the limits of the budget granted by the European Union, in order to combat all forms of criminality in the region.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Niger's WAPIS National Committee reaffirms its commitment to implementing WAPIS

The 3rd WAPIS National Committee meeting for Niger was held on 24 February 2022. It was chaired by the Director General of the Niger National Police, Mr Souley BOUBACAR. After reviewing the implementation of WAPIS in Niger over recent months, the WAPIS National Committee took important decisions in the context of continuing WAPIS in Niger and for adoption of the System by the operational services of the country's three security forces: the National Police, National Gendarmerie and National Guard.

As a side event to this National Committee, a workshop on validating the standard operating policy and procedures (SOP) as well as on the memorandum of procedures to be followed in the context of WAPIS was organized. The workshop participants included representatives of Niger's different law enforcement agencies, notably members of the judicial system (judges, assistant public prosecutor and examining judges). At the end of this two-day workshop, the standard operating policy and procedures for using the databases and the memorandum of procedures to be followed were able to be adapted to Nigerian national legislation and approved by the expert committee.



WAPIS National Committee meeting, 24 February 2022, Niamey, Niger

This mission was also an opportunity to meet a number of international partners, notably the EU mission to Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), FRONTEX, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with a view to creating synergies in order to improve the implementation of WAPIS in Niger.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Training law enforcement officers remains a priority for the WAPIS Programme



MAURITANIA

Country: Mauritania, Nouakchott

Law enforcement agencies involved in training:
National Police

Dates: 7-11 March 2022

Number of people trained: 10



SENEGAL

Country: Senegal, Dakar

Law enforcement agencies involved in training:

National Police
National Gendarmerie

Dates: 7-18 March 2022

Number of people trained: 20

Dates: 28 March-8 April 2022

Number of people trained: 20



TOGO

Country: Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

Law enforcement agencies involved in training:

National Police
National Gendarmerie
WAPIS national IT technicians
SPOC/DACORE manager

Dates: 21 February-4 March 2022

Number of people trained: 13

Law enforcement agencies involved in training:

National Police
National Gendarmerie

Dates: 7-11 March 2022

Number of people trained: 15



SIERRA LEONE

Country: Sierra Leone, Freetown

Law enforcement agencies involved in training:

Sierra Leone Police
Immigration Department
Anti-Corruption Commission

Dates: 7-11 March 2022

Number of people trained: 51



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Country: Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

Law enforcement agencies involved in training:

National Police
National Gendarmerie

Dates: 21 February-4 March 2022

Number of people trained: 26

Dates: 15-18 March 2022

Number of people trained: 19

THE MEN AND WOMEN BEHIND THE SYSTEM

Gambia joined the WAPIS Programme during the 3EDF Phase in November 2017. The country has signed the MoU and is taking the necessary steps towards implementing the system at the national level. The engagement of the local authorities is an example that needs to be shared with the other countries for the success of WAPIS in the region. To shed light on this fruitful collaboration, Pateh BAH, Deputy Commissioner of Police, WAPIS Single Point of Contact for Gambia, shared some thoughts with us.



Surname: BAH

First name:
PATEH

Rank: Deputy
Commissioner of
Police

In Post since:
1 January 2019

VISION OF WAPIS

Gambia is proud and honoured to be implementing the WAPIS Programme to facilitate the collection, centralization and electronic sharing of police data automatically between national law enforcement agencies and maintain cooperation between West African law enforcement agencies in the fight against transnational organized crime and terrorism.

In terms of expansion, the DACORE continues to conduct training of more security officers from different law enforcement agencies in use of the WAPIS System. The IT expert for WAPIS in the Gambia is in consultation with the country's network providers to facilitate the connection of the remote site to the DACORE. They have already conducted a survey and the invoices are pending.

We look forward to working with the relevant authority at the political level in order to endorse the budget and ratify the data protection law before the end of June 2022. We hope to be among the countries selected for the pilot phase of the AFIS System.

In conclusion, I want to advise other WAPIS participating countries to work with their authorities to retain personnel trained in the WAPIS System for at least three years to ensure the sustainability of the work, but also to involve their Inspector General of Police in order to ensure smooth implementation of the WAPIS Programme in their respective countries.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **1 February 1995:** Re-enlisted into the Gambia Police Force (GPF)
- **1 September 2003:** Station Officer at Banjul International Airport
- **1 June 2007:** Deputy Officer commanding the Kanifing Region
- **2007-2008:** African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS)
- **1 August 2009:** Officer commanding the Kanifing Region
- **2011-2013:** United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)
- **1 September 2015:** Appointed Deputy Crime Management Coordinator (CMC) of the Gambia Police Force (GPF)
- **7 May 2017:** Appointed Regional Crime Coordinator (CRO) for the Kanifing Region
- **2018:** Appointed as the Single Point of Contact for the West African Police Information System (WAPIS)

CONCLUSION



Richard GOTWE

WAPIS programme director

Dear readers,

The current WAPIS Programme implementation phase, which began in November 2017, is on the verge of completion in June 2022. In recent months, we have made significant progress in implementation, and this new issue of the newsletter is a quintessential illustration of our efforts.

However, two months from the end of this implementation period, we can without hesitation state that some of the targets set or expected results will not be achieved. This is due to a variety of challenges and unforeseen events we have encountered during implementation of the Programme. These challenges include, amongst others, the COVID pandemic and its impact on the Programme and various participants in the countries, or even on the political engagement and sociopolitical challenges in the participating countries which have delayed adoption of the legal frameworks.

The majority of these challenges have since been taken up and there now exists a favourable framework for continued implementation of the Programme and our goals. It is for this reason, and taking account of the recommendation of the last Programme Steering Committee, which met in Abidjan on 10 February 2022, that we have begun the process, in collaboration with the European Union Commission and the ECOWAS Commission, of prolonging the Programme execution period for a few more months. We therefore hope to be able to have the great pleasure of telling you about the favourable outcome of this process in our next issue.

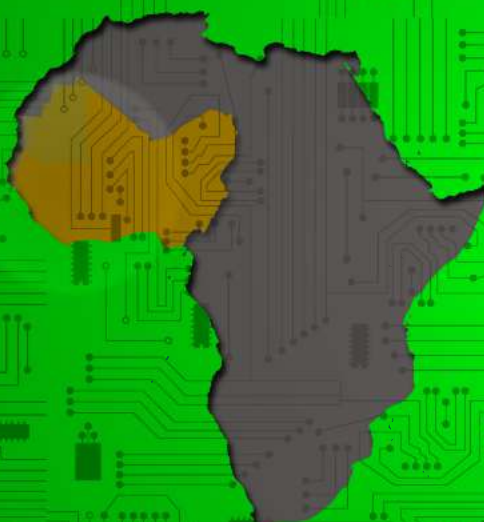
In the meantime, I am extremely proud to announce the launch of the new AFIS project as of 1 March for a period of 33 months, thanks to EUR 15 million of funding from the European Union. The AFIS project will boost the operational capacity of national WAPIS systems in a region of West Africa where civil status registers and identity documents are not always reliable. Implementation of this Automated Fingerprint Identification System will therefore make it much easier to identify criminals.

The coming weeks will be marked by effective operationalization of the Data Collection and Registration Centres (DACOREs) in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo. Then, we will still have to make the DACOREs operational in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, which are in the process of being renovated, and the one in Guinea, which is awaiting the

assignment of qualified staff, and finally that of Liberia, where activities remain suspended in the absence of a suitable legal framework being put in place. We hope that the forthcoming strategic visits of the Programme planned to Guinea and Liberia in the coming weeks will allow us to remove all the obstacles to effective implementation of the System in these countries. In addition, the WAPIS team will focus in particular on implementing the extension of WAPIS beyond the DACORE, as well as I-24/7 WAPIS connections in all the beneficiary countries.

I can't end my speech without reiterating my thanks to the European Union for its unwavering support, and to the ECOWAS Commission, our strategic partner, for its fruitful collaboration in the context of this Programme. I would like to extend these thanks to our national points of contact (SPOCs) who have been supporting us, to the DACORE directors who have joined the WAPIS family, to the legal and technical experts in every country, the administrators, operators, validators, and finally the users who make the WAPIS system work on a daily basis.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm here my total commitment and our determination to do all we can to ensure that WAPIS becomes your daily work tool and that it contributes effectively to increasing your capacity to tackle transnational crime and terrorism, thanks to improved management and sharing of police information.



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